

- ✓ **Medicaid direct certification**
  - Improve school meals access
  - Expand CEP
  - Preserve data for ESSA
- ✓ **Better wages for school nutrition**
- ✓ **Local Procurement**

Ideas for Montana:  
**Improving Access  
to Healthy,  
Locally Sourced  
School Meals**

# Free and Reduced-Price School Meals, in context

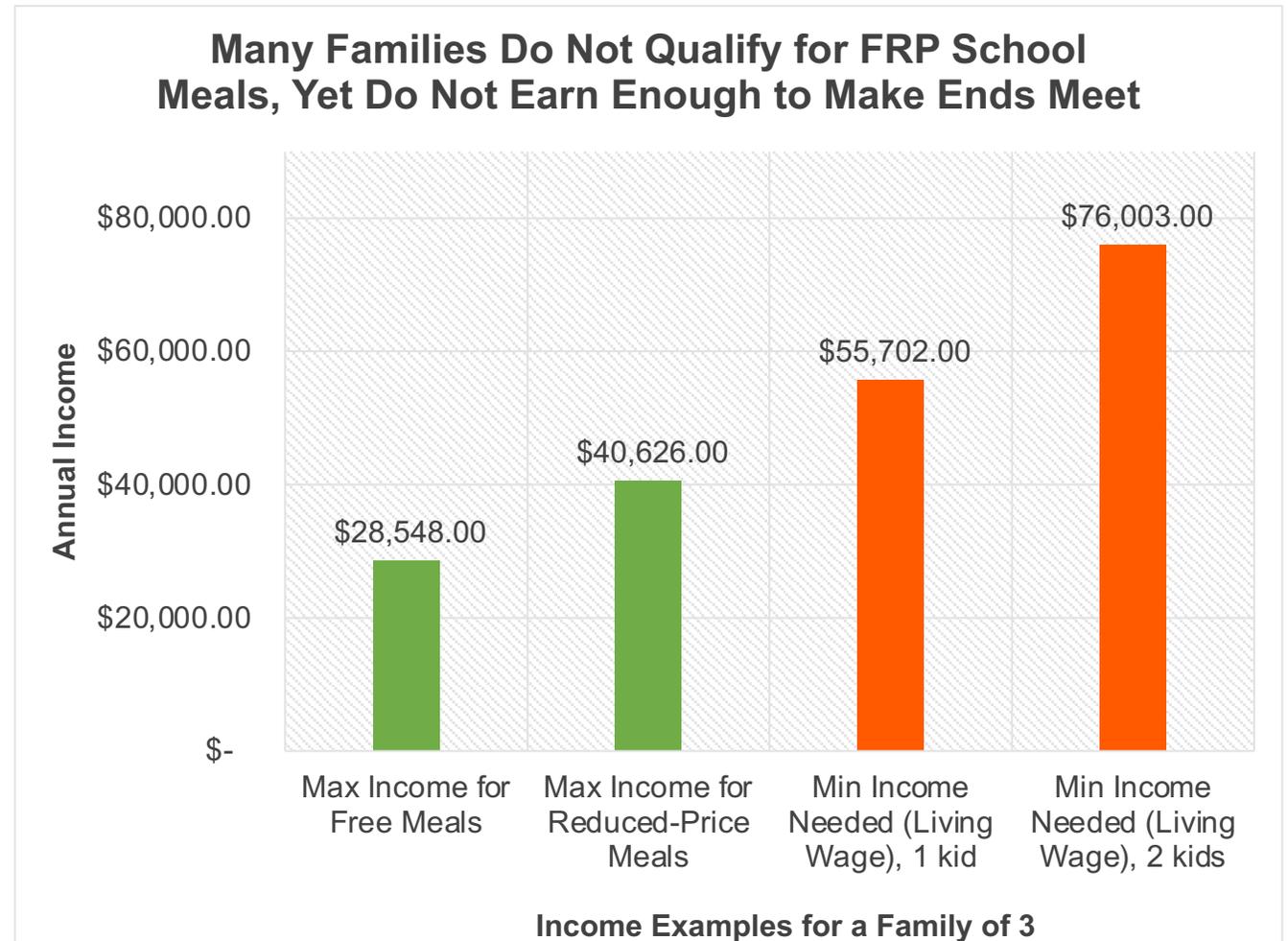
A household in Great Falls metro area with **2 adults and 1 child**

- 185% of FPL = \$40,626
- 130% of FPL = \$28,548
- Living wage = \$55,702

A household in Great Falls metro area with **1 adult and 2 children**

- Living wage = \$76,003

Source: [MIT Living Wage](#)



# Medicaid Direct Certification

1

- In 2021, 39,184 children, 0-18, were enrolled in SNAP ([Source](#))
- In 2021, 104,101 children, 0-18, were enrolled in Medicaid ([Source](#))
- Participating in USDA's Medicaid direct certification demonstration project would enable Montana to...
  - Ensure students from low-income households get the benefits they deserve (access to free or reduced-price school meals)
  - Cut red tape associated with school meals applications
  - Increase schools' eligibility for CEP (universal free school meals)
  - Increase Montana's eligibility for statewide CEP, if passed by the Build Back Better Act
  - Bring more federal dollars to Montana's school nutrition program
  - Buffer against data loss associated with universal free school meals during the pandemic, especially with respect to the "economically disadvantaged indicator" for ESSA
- **Recommendation:** Apply for Medicaid direct certification by 9/30/22.

# Understanding Direct Certification

Program	% FPL	Use for FRP meals	Use for data & accountability
Free school meals	130%	Application	No longer reliable with free meals for all
Reduced-price school meals	185%	Application	No longer reliable with free meals for all
SNAP	130%	Direct certification	Currently used
TANF	130%	Direct certification	Currently used
FDPIR	~110%	Direct certification	Currently used
<b>MT Medicaid</b>	<b>143%</b>	<b>Potential direct cert</b>	<b>Possible</b>
<b>MT CHIP</b>	<b>210%</b>	<b>Not allowable for meals eligibility</b>	<b>Possible</b>



# What is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

CEP enables eligible schools to provide breakfast and lunch to **all** students at no cost.

- Healthy school meals for all!
- Reduces stigma for school meals
- Removes application barrier to accessing free meals
- Improves student behavioral and academic outcomes
- Eliminates school meal debt
- Decreases financial stress
- Improves school nutrition morale
- Facilitates Breakfast After the Bell (BAB)

# CEP Benefits Students, Families, & Schools

Research shows that the Community Eligibility Provision is associated with...

- decreased BMI across grade levels<sup>1</sup>
- decreased rates of student hunger<sup>2</sup>
- lower rates of household food insecurity<sup>3</sup>
- increased household purchasing power<sup>4</sup>
- higher student math test scores<sup>5,6</sup>
- decreased disciplinary referrals<sup>7</sup>
- increased likelihood that students will be promoted to the next grade on time<sup>7</sup>
- improved attendance<sup>8</sup>
- improved job satisfaction among school nutrition staff<sup>9</sup>
- increased participation in school meals<sup>10-14</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Davis W & Musaddiq T. Estimating the Effects of Universal Free School Meal Enrollment on Child Health: Evidence from the Community Eligibility Provision in Georgia Schools. 2018. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3155354>.

<sup>2</sup>Kleinman RE, Hall S, Green H, et al. Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. *Ann Nutr Metab.* 2002; 46(suppl 1):24–30.

<sup>3</sup>Gross SM, Kelley TL, Augustyn M, Wilson MJ, Bassarab K, Palmer A. Household food security status of families with children attending schools that participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and those with children attending schools that are CEP-eligible, but not participating. *J Hunger Environ Nutr.* 2019;0(0):1–16.

<sup>4</sup>Poblacion A, Cook J, de Cuba SE, et al. Can food insecurity be reduced in the United States by improving SNAP, WIC, and the Community Eligibility Provision? *World Med Health Policy.* 2017; 9(4):435–455.

<sup>5</sup>Gordani J, Ozturk OD, Williams B, Zhan C. Free lunch for all! The effect of the Community Eligibility Provision on academic outcomes. February 2019. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3333530>.

<sup>6</sup>Ruffini K. Universal access to free school meals and student achievement: evidence from the Community Eligibility Provision. IRLE Working Paper No. 102-18. Available at: <https://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2018/10/UniversalAccess-to-Free-School-Meals-andStudent-Achievement.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>Kho A. Three Essays on School Reform [dissertation]. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University; August 2018.

<sup>8</sup>Barfield JS, Berger L, Men F. Universal access to free school meals through the Community Eligibility Provision is associated with better attendance for low income elementary school students in Wisconsin. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2020;120(2): 210–218.

<sup>9</sup>Hecht AA. Universal Free School Meals: Implementation of the Community Eligibility Provision and Impacts on Student Nutrition, Behavior, and Academic Performance. [Dissertation] Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; 2020.

<sup>10</sup>Logan CW, Connor P, Harvill EL, et al. Community eligibility provision evaluation. US Dept of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. 2014. Available at: <https://fnsp-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/CEPEvaluation.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>Turner L, Guthrie JF, Ralston K. Community eligibility and other provisions for universal free meals at school: impact on student breakfast and lunch participation in California public schools. *Transl Behav Med.* 2019;9(5):931–941.

<sup>12</sup>Ruffini K. Universal access to free school meals and student achievement: evidence from the Community Eligibility Provision. IRLE Working Paper No. 102-18. Available at: <https://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2018/10/UniversalAccess-to-Free-School-Meals-andStudent-Achievement.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup>Pokomey PE, Chandran A, Long MW. Impact of the Community Eligibility Provision on meal counts and participation in Pennsylvania and Maryland National School Lunch Programs. *Public Health Nutr.* 2019;22(17):3281–3287.

<sup>14</sup>Tan, ML, Lاراia, B, Madsen, KA, Johnson, RC, Ritchie, L. Community Eligibility Provision and School Meal Participation among Student Subgroups. *J School Health.* 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12942>.



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## The Build Back Better Act

- Raises CEP multiplier from 1.6 to **2.5\***
- Lowers CEP eligibility threshold from 40% ISP to 25%\*
- Creates a statewide CEP option\*

\*Subject to change

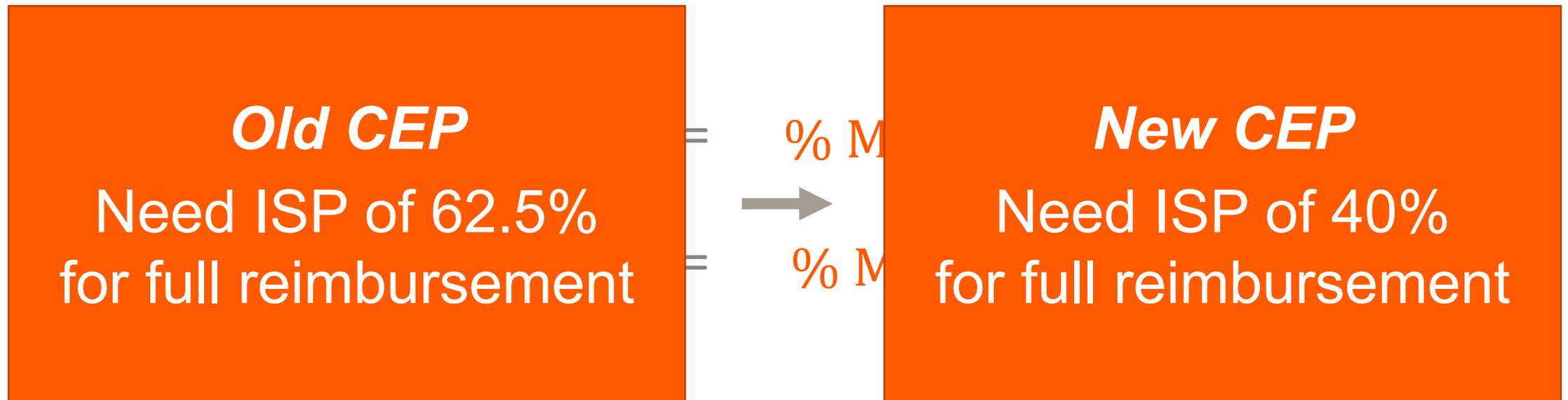
# ISP

*Medicaid adds more students to the numerator, raising the ISP!*

$$= \frac{\text{\# of "identified" students}}{\text{total student enrollment}} \times 100$$

**Identified Students** = SNAP, TANF, FDPIR Foster Care, Homeless, Migrant, Head Start/Early Head Start

# Reimbursement



The ISP multiplier will be increased from 1.6 to **2.5** after the passage of the Build Back Better Act.

# Expand CEP

2

- With the BBBA changes, Montana will more than double the number of schools eligible to operate CEP (131 → 284)
- Currently, only 51 schools are eligible to receive full reimbursement under CEP
- With the BBBA changes, 131 schools will be eligible to receive full reimbursement under CEP
- With Medicaid direct certification on top of BBBA, even more schools will be eligible for CEP
- **Recommendation:** Apply for Medicaid direct certification demonstration project by September 30, 2022
- Montana may be able to operate statewide CEP at minimal cost for the state
- **Recommendation:** Conduct an analysis to see how much it would cost for Montana to do statewide CEP

- **Food**
- **Packaging**
- **Kitchen Equipment**
- **Staff Salary**
- **Staff Benefits**



**\$3.60**

# Support Fair Wages for School Nutrition Workers

3

- In the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) nationwide [2021 Supply Chain Survey](#), 95% of respondents said that staff shortages are a challenge for their program
  - 1/3 say they lack sufficient funds to provide a raise or bonus to keep and attract new staff
- Montana can provide supplemental, per-meal funding to support essential school nutrition workers
- Colorado legislation: 12 cents per lunch
  - Would cost MT approx. \$6,223.92 per year
- **Recommendation:** Explore appropriating funds to invest in better wages for school nutrition workers

# Incentivize Local Procurement in School Meals

4

- In the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) nationwide [2021 Supply Chain Survey](#), 98% of respondents said:
  - Menu items are not available in sufficient quantities
  - Menu items are discontinued by manufacturer
- Montana can provide supplemental, per-meal funding to
  - Support local procurement
  - Improve local economy
  - Improve students' nutrition
- Colorado legislation: 25 cents per lunch
  - Would cost MT approx. \$12,966.50 per year
- **Recommendation:** Explore appropriating funds to invest in schools' local procurement efforts



THANK YOU

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